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ABSTRACT

This report (based on testimony presented at a 1984 public hearing and a review of the literature on educational reform) addresses the role of equity in attaining effective public education, especially in Kentucky, by describing educational problems of that State. The basic premise is that excellence cannot be achieved without equity, and that recent "at risk" reports have not fully acknowledged this fact. Children who do not "fit" into Kentucky's schools are identified as black, poor, handicapped, female, and/or dropout. They are said to suffer from two basic inequities: (1) lack of access, which excludes them and their parents from certain programs and decision-making processes; and (2) lack of preparation for post-school employment and inability to find jobs commensurate with their skills. Seven equity problems specific to Kentucky are outlined and recommendations are made for their solution: (1) School reform must include the provision of necessary social services. (2) Education should not depend on the wealth of the students' community. (3) Discipline practices in Kentucky are, in general, too severe. (4) Students, parents and citizens must be involved in school decision-making. (5) Educational services are not being improved in proportion to the rising standards. (6) Basic skills are being defined too narrowly: the purpose of education is to prepare children for full participation in a democratic society. Finally, (7) the current trend in vocational education will not result in better job opportunities, but will in many cases deny students a sound academic education. (KH)

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KENTUCKY'S CHILDREN AT RISK:

The Inequities in Public Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA), Inc. is a statewide public interest group representing the interests of children. As part of our effort to promote dialogue on how our public institutions treat the children entrusted to their care, KYA held a public hearing on January 26, 1984 in which citizens were asked to address equity in Kentucky's public schools. This summary includes the major conclusions drawn from the testimony presented. Because much of the public debate on education has been focused on "excellence", sometimes to the detriment of many of Kentucky's children, the KYA hearing centered on those children that do not "fit" into our state's schools, including: (1) black children, (2) poor children, (3) handicapped children, (4) female students, and (5) dropouts.

The KYA hearing focused on two basic equity issues:

- Access: Many students continue to be excluded from certain educational programs and services. On another level, parents, students, and citizens are often excluded from participating in the school decision-making process, and

- Jobs: Large numbers of young people find their passage into adulthood characterized by exclusion, as they are unable to find employment or employment commensurate with their skills.

Findings

Based on the oral and written testimony presented at the hearing and some additional research, KYA identified the following problems.

- *Many children who attend Kentucky's schools bring with them physical, psychological and social problems, often related to their home situation that interfere with learning. Neither public education nor social agencies have fully accepted the responsibility for addressing these problems.*

  At this point, those in charge of our schools and our social agencies are engaged in a finger-pointing exercise, each saying the other has the responsibility for making sure that Kentucky's children are "school ready" when they come to class.

- *Education in Kentucky is underfunded statewide and unequally funded among the 180 local school districts.*

  While money cannot solve all of Kentucky's education problems, many reforms will require new financial resources. Additionally, districts differ widely in the resources currently available to them.

- *Discipline in Kentucky schools is often handled in a punitive, exclusionary and arbitrary fashion. Discipline is not seen within the context of creating a positive school climate.*

  Based on testimony presented at the hearing, there are no uniform criteria used for discipline in Kentucky's schools. Additionally, the forms of discipline used often do more harm than good.

- *Kentucky schools do not work to develop meaningful ways to involve students, parents and other community citizens in decision-making about education.*

  While lack of participation is often blamed on apathy, testimony provided during the hearings indicate that students and parents are frequently discouraged and excluded from participating in decision-making.

- *Kentucky's decision-makers are moving to raise standards without providing additional educational services necessary for many students to meet these standards. Raising standards without increasing educational services will only assure failure for increasing numbers of students.*

  The move to excellence means more than raising standards; it means providing more individualized education and remedial services to students who are struggling to compete.

- *Basic skills are being defined too narrowly in Kentucky's schools. Many of the competencies students need most are ignored in the rush "back to basics."*

  The current discussion about the role of public education neglects broader skills that children need in order to take their place in society. The full report lists six basic skills that should be the foundation of Kentucky's public schools.

- *The current trend in public education is to narrowly gear education to the job market. This vocational education trend will not result in better job opportunities for most students and in many cases will deny them a sound academic education.*

  The job market is dramatically changing. Many workers will change careers several times during their life. As a result, children need to expand their basic skills into critical thinking and the skills necessary to pursue a lifetime of learning.

Conclusions

The purpose of education is to prepare all children for full participation in a democratic society. This includes the knowledge and skills necessary to:

- actively participate in the national, state and local political processes,
- pursue job training and life-long learning,
- obtain employment, and
- enjoy a community and family life.

KYA has outlined eight principles which we believe set the stage for providing a quality education for all children. Further, these principles establish guidelines for addressing problems in education, many of which are specific to Kentucky.

The eight principles are:

1. Educational excellence is not possible without equity in education. Kentucky must be committed to providing a quality education to all children.
2. School reform in Kentucky must include the provision of necessary social services to children and their families. Social service agencies and education systems must work together to ensure that both social service needs and educational needs are met. The Kentucky General Assembly must make a commitment to fully fund social service and educational programs for disadvantaged children.

3. The quality of education available to students should not depend on the wealth of the community where the student lives. State decision-makers should examine the unmet needs of all children. A plan should then be developed for the most equitable way to generate necessary revenue and allocate funds to meet the educational needs of all Kentucky's children.

4. Schools must be positive places in which to study and teach. The learning environment must reflect the democratic commitment to the inclusion of all, a respect and appreciation for every student's culture, and a respect for the full constitutional rights of students and teachers.

5. High educational expectations and standards must be accompanied by clear commitments of support for students and staff. There must be a full dedication to the development of every child's potential for learning and a willingness to restructure or reorganize schools so that all children can learn.

6. Parents, teachers, students, and concerned citizens must work together to achieve the goals of quality education for every child. Schools should develop and implement "affirmative action" plans for involving these groups of people.

7. The curriculum of the schools must deal with the needs of the whole child. Focusing too much attention on narrowly defined "basics" or on vocational education undermines the broader and equally important goals of developing children's intellectual capacities, personal strengths, and their sense of social and civic responsibility.

8. Today's marketplace should not dictate educational reform measures. Rather, educational reform should seek to provide children with the necessary skills to make changes, to improve all aspects of our society, including the marketplace.

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PREFACE

Historically, Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA), Inc. has represented the interest of children in the foster care, mental health and juvenile justice systems. After seven years of work in these areas, KYA realized that many children who have been referred to our state's courts are also having problems in school. The children for whom KYA has traditionally advocated are the same children who do not "fit" into the educational system. They are the children who fall behind in school achievement at an early age, who experience discipline problems in school, and who drop out of school. They are the children to whom the educational system does not know how to respond. KYA has, therefore, moved into education reform as a logical extension of our work on behalf of these youth.

This report is the second in a series which KYA has presented to the Kentucky Juvenile Justice Commission. The first report, Our Children at Risk: The Crisis in Public Education, was a call for a public hearing. This second report summarizes the problems identified at the hearing. (KYA has prepared twenty-seven other reports for the Commission since 1977. A list of these reports is available from the KYA office.)

INTRODUCTION

The National Call for Educational Reform

National attention has focused on reform in the nation's public schools. The April, 1983, report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation At Risk," was the first in a number of reports to call attention to the problems in public education. The report stated that the American education system is "being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity" that threatens the future of the country. Other reports echo this concern.

Even before these reports were published, President Reagan took office in 1980 promising reform in education: to abolish the U. S. Department of Education, to enact tax credits for tuition to private elementary and secondary schools, and to return prayer to the schools. To date, he has not accomplished these goals but he has made reductions in the amount of federal aid to public education. President Reagan, like most of the national reports, suggests that the problems in American education come down to a broad relaxation of standards. His solution is to restore the excellence in our schools that he believes once existed.

Educational Reform in Kentucky

The call for educational reform has been issued in Kentucky. The need to improve Kentucky's schools was one of the major issues of the 1983 gubernatorial race. The campaign for the state's Superintendent of Public Instruction swept a reform candidate into office. In October and November of last year, one of the state's leading newspapers, The Courier-Journal, ran an eight-day investigative series called "Crisis in the Classroom" which focused public attention on the state's schools. A number of blue ribbon panels have offered proposals for upgrading Kentucky's schools. Nearly every special interest group has developed its own blueprint for change.

Reform in public education was one of the primary focuses of the 1984 General Assembly. The Governor, reversing her campaign position against a tax increase, introduced a tax package to generate more state revenue. Seventy percent of the new revenue was targeted for education. The public did not agree on the need for more taxes and the education advocates did not agree on the proposed reforms. The Governor was forced to withdraw her package of tax increases and educational reform measures in the last days of the legislative session.

Some reform bills did survive and were passed by the 1984 legislature. However, a strict continuation budget generally limited those reforms. Money was transferred from other programs to fund the following measures:

- o mandatory kindergarten beginning in the 1985-1986 school year,
- o basic skills testing and remediation in the early grades (grades 1-2),
- o testing and one year internship for new teachers,
- o initial and in-service training for school personnel in academic leadership positions,
- o more stringent state monitoring of "academically deficient" school districts, and
- o mandated local financial support of schools.

These measures have put Kentucky on the road to educational reform. State decision-makers, educators and interested citizens continue to debate the needs of Kentucky's public schools. Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA), Inc. shares the concerns that our schools need to be improved, that federal and state governments have an important responsibility in the maintenance of quality public education for all students and that quality public education is vital to the future of our country. However, we believe there are serious omissions in the current discussion about educational reform.

Kentucky Youth Advocates is concerned about "the children at risk", those children for whom KYA traditionally advocates. These are the abused and neglected children, the children who experience emotional problems and children who are involved with the juvenile justice system. Frequently, these children are also poor or minority children. The children at risk are being left out of the current educational debate. We do not want them to be left out of educational reform. To achieve educational excellence, Kentucky must achieve educational equity. All of Kentucky's children must have an equal opportunity to a quality education.

WHY ANOTHER EDUCATION REPORT?

KYA is writing another education report because we believe that the educational needs of large numbers of children--the children at risk--have been ignored. Poor students, racial minorities, disruptive students and high school dropouts are being denied an equal opportunity to a quality education. The existing reports make recommendations for achieving excellence in Kentucky's education system; however, they do not address the problems of equity in education. Without addressing equity, the new excellence Kentucky achieves will not extend to all students.

This report is based on the premise that excellence in education cannot be achieved without equity in education. It discusses how Kentucky's public education system fails to respond to the children at risk. The report also explores how these children are being denied equal access to a quality education.

This report is a unique opportunity to obtain input from service providers and consumers in Kentucky's education system. Teachers, parents, and students provided information based on their experiences. They provided us with a first hand perspective on Kentucky's educational needs, which differs from the perspective in many other reports.

"They are the children who do not fit, and in the final analysis, are not wanted in the schools."

- retired guidance counselor

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN AT RISK?

Introduction

The children at risk are those for whom a quality education is most important, yet they benefit the least from the current system. Because they do not "fit" into the traditional public education system, schools do not know how to respond to these children. They have the same potential as do other children. However, they are "at risk" of not having this potential developed because the necessary services are not provided to them. They are the children for whom expectations are low, regardless of individual potential. They are frequently unchallenged, ignored, "tracked" out of the educational mainstream, and may ultimately be pushed out of school.

Because the children at risk have traditionally been underserved by the public education system, these children do not move on to greater expectations. More than ever, public schools are acting as "gatekeepers" to the future. Most children whose needs are not met in school grow into adults unable to actively participate in our society. These children are "at risk" of losing their future.

The children at risk are not a small group of children. Currently, they make up a significant portion of Kentucky's school enrollment. While it is difficult to calculate exactly, the children at risk could total half of Kentucky's public school enrollment.

Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Students

Large numbers of children come to school from homes that are not meeting their basic needs. These children may be poor, neglected, abused, or in the middle of family problems such as divorce or unemployment. When a child is hungry, inadequately clothed, or distracted by family problems, he is unable to concentrate on learning. Additionally, the lack of experiences and the lack of self confidence inhibit these children from competing with their

classmates. Without special social services as well as educational services, these children will fall farther behind in school and in life. Large numbers of children are poor and socially disadvantaged:

- 22% of all children in Kentucky live in poverty (less than $7,412 annually for a family of four). Kentucky ranks 6th among the 50 states in the percent of children living in poverty. (1980, U.S. Census Bureau)
- 105,124 Kentucky children were supported by welfare payments during the month of June, 1984 (Kentucky Cabinet for Human Resources)
- In the 1983-84 school year, 284,099 Kentucky children qualified for the free or reduced price school lunch program. This number represents 44% of Kentucky's total public school enrollment. (Kentucky Department of Education)
- 30,455 Kentucky children were reported as neglected or abused in 1983. (Kentucky Cabinet for Human Resources)
- On any given day 2,700 children are in the state's foster care program for neglected and abused children. (Kentucky Cabinet for Human Resources)
- 16,985 divorces were recorded in Kentucky in 1983.
- 98,268 single parent families live in Kentucky (1980 Census, Urban Studies Center, University of Louisville)
- 3,261 Kentucky children were committed in 1983 to state programs for children with emotional or behavioral problems. (Kentucky Cabinet for Human Resources)
- 198,000 Kentuckians were known to be unemployed in 1983. (Kentucky Bureau for Manpower Services)

These children are often unprepared to learn when they enter school. The children at risk begin their schooling already behind their more fortunate classmates.

Black Students

Unlike other areas of the country, black students comprise the only significant racial or cultural minority in Kentucky's schools. Black families are located primarily in the urban areas of Kentucky, though some black families live in rural areas as well. Some black

families have made significant social and economic progress during the years since civil rights legislation was enacted. However, many black families are still struggling to overcome the poverty and deprivation brought on by centuries of racial discrimination.

An equal opportunity to a quality education is the first step toward a successful future for black children. This opportunity is often hampered. Black children are no longer prohibited from entering a school building because of their race. However, they are faced with the subtle, and sometimes blatant, racial prejudices of an education system designed by and for the "white majority". Because black children come to school with a cultural background which may not "fit" into the educational system, they are often misunderstood, misevaluated, and misplaced. Black children are disproportionately represented in discipline statistics and in special education placements.

In addition, black children are disproportionately poor. Therefore, many black children come to school with the same problems as those listed for the socially and economically disadvantaged. Without an equal opportunity to a quality education, black children will not have an equal opportunity to a productive adult life.

Kentucky's black population is a significant part of the total state population:

- Black families compose 7% of Kentucky's total population. (1980 U.S. Census, Urban Studies Center, University of Louisville)
- 157 school districts out of the 180 districts in Kentucky have black students enrolled.
- The minority enrollment in Kentucky schools increased from 9.5% in 1972 to 12.2% in 1982. (U.S. Department of Education)

Handicapped Students

A 1975 federal law, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142), mandated that all handicapped children have a right to a free appropriate public education.

Prior to the 1975 federal law, the public education provided to these children was limited or non-existent. Without an equal opportunity to a quality education, handicapped children are denied the chance to reach their full potential as adults. Most handicapped children are capable of becoming productive, independent adults.

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that 12% of all students are so severely handicapped as to require special educational services. According to this estimate, Kentucky should have 86,410 students in special education. Currently, however, only 68,775 students are being provided special educational services.

Female Students

A woman's role in the family and in our society is changing. Women now have choices in personal life-styles and in career opportunities. Before women can take advantage of these opportunities, they must have a quality education. This education must provide them with decision-making skills and the knowledge of opportunities open to them. Female students must have access to the same educational choices as male students.

Unfortunately, female students often face prejudices in school that deny them an equal opportunity to a quality education. Girls are not expected or encouraged to do well in math and science. In high schools, girls are disproportionately counseled into training programs for clerical or other low paying jobs.

Additionally, many teenage girls have to deal with pregnancy and child care responsibility while in school. In most cases this means not graduating. In general, schools have not assisted pregnant teenagers or teenage parents in completing high school. The following statistics show the importance of developing the potential of Kentucky's female population:

- o 51% of Kentucky's population is female. (1980 U.S. Census, Urban Studies Center, University of Louisville)

- o 48% of Kentucky's school enrollment is female. (1983-84, Kentucky Department of Education)

- o 83,594 Kentucky families with children are headed by females. 44.5% of these families are living below the poverty level. (1980 U.S. Census, Urban Studies Center, University of Louisville)

Dropouts

"Dropouts", or students who do not graduate from high school, are a large part of the crisis in public education. These children leave high school ill-prepared for the labor market and ill-prepared for life. Dropouts are disproportionately represented in the unemployed population, in poverty populations, and in prison populations.

Efforts to address the dropout problem in Kentucky have been scattered and funding has been limited. Since 1977 many Kentucky school districts have received state and federal funding for model dropout prevention programs. Though these programs have been successful in keeping students in school, few districts maintain the programs when the state and federal funding is gone.

Additionally, dropout prevention programs are designed for junior and senior high school students. This ignores the fact that the problems associated with students who drop out actually begin in elementary school.

The following statistics indicate the magnitude of the dropout problem in Kentucky:

- o Only 65.0% of the students who entered the 9th grade in 1978 graduated in 1982. Nationally, this figure is about 74%. This means that 22,975 Kentucky students left school between 1978 and 1982. (Kentucky Department of Education.)

- o Kentucky ranks 50th among all states in high school graduates. Only 53.1% of those over the age of twenty-five are high school graduates (1980, U.S. Census Bureau.)

INEQUITIES IN KENTUCKY'S PUBLIC EDUCATION

Introduction

Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA), Inc. is concerned about the quality of education for all students. However, we are also concerned about the specific problems facing the children at risk. These problems can be summed up in one word: inequity. The children at risk have not been provided an equal opportunity to the educational services that currently exist. While the overall quality of education must be improved, changes must also be made to ensure that the children at risk have access to these improved services.

Educational equity serves not only the best interest of the child but also the best interest of society. The education system must address the needs of all of its children because:

- All children have a right to an equal opportunity in education. This is a fundamental belief in our society.
- All children need the necessary skills for good citizenship.
- Without a good education, children will grow into adults who are dependent on government support. They will be unable to support themselves or their families.
- Undeveloped potential amounts to lost and untapped resources for Kentucky's future.

KYA has identified two basic inequities which we believe have not received sufficient attention during the current debate on educational reform. They are:

Access: Many students continue to be excluded from certain educational programs and services. On another level, parents, students and citizens are often excluded from participating in the school decision-making process, and

Jobs: Large numbers of young people find their passage into adulthood characterized by exclusion, as they are unable to find employment or employment commensurate with their skills.

It is the children at risk who are most likely to be, although not exclusively, the victims of these inequities.

"so often teachers give (the) impression to kids, if you're not college material, you're not worth bothering with."

- a high school dropout

Access: An Historical Perspective

The access issue has been at the center of some of the major changes in public education in this country. In fact, secondary education for all students is a relatively new concept. It was not until the 1950's that secondary school attendance became the rule, not the exception. In the 1920's and 1930's, high school was reserved for an elite of the nation's teenagers. The compulsory school age was raised in the 1930's, when children were no longer necessary as a source of labor in the work place. By the 1940's, forty percent of all teenagers graduated from high school.

More importantly, for the greater part of this century, black children were enrolled in entirely separate schools. Most of these schools were underfunded, denying large numbers of children educational opportunities. The United State Supreme Court outlawed segregated schools in 1954 but the battle against racial discrimination continues.

The civil rights and school advocacy movements of the 1960's and 1970's concentrated in fighting blanket exclusion of large classes of students including:

- o those with physical or mental handicaps,
- o those who became pregnant,
- o those who lived in isolated rural areas, and
- o those who were disruptive.

Today the exclusion of students is more subtle. Fewer students are actually denied admission to secondary schools, but many students are in fact excluded from a quality education. They are "tracked" (separated) out of the regular class or placed in "alternative" schools and classes that limit their educational experience. Some are expelled or suspended from school and others drop out because they are frustrated with their school careers. Poor and minority children are disproportionately excluded from mainstream educational services.

"we haven't decided if we want high schools to be a place to create success for all Americans or be a sorting out institution."

- Harold Howe II

Jobs: Preparing for the Future

Many of the proposed education reforms address the adequate preparation of students for the labor market. There is concern that those students who do not complete high school will be unable to support themselves and their families in adulthood. There is another concern that in order to prepare young people for the high technology of the future there must be renewed emphasis on mathematics and science and a new emphasis placed on computer technology. Indeed, much of the rhetoric about school reform is couched in economic terms: a strong economy depends on a strong educational system.

The establishment of public schools as a universal institution was rooted in the belief--first articulated by Thomas Jefferson--that literacy, moral values and understanding of the democratic process were necessary for the exercise of good citizenship and perpetuation of the nation. The school curriculum was designed to give each student a so-called "liberal" education. Historically, vocational training took place outside the school system. As school enrollments expanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the emphasis shifted to preparing students for work. The vocational

emphasis was primarily for immigrant and poor children who were expected to take their places in the blue collar jobs created by industrialization.

American industry and the labor market are changing. The number of blue collar jobs is decreasing. At the same time, many youth who graduate from high school today are not adequately prepared for employment. Often they cannot find employment or, when they do, they cannot keep it because of their low skill level.

Many believe that the growth of technology will shape the future job market. Many reform proposals suggest that schools should prepare students specifically for this advanced technology. Technology is changing the number and types of jobs available, but not expanding the number of high paying jobs as these proposals suggest. Labor market projections indicate that there will be fewer high skilled, high paying jobs and more low skilled, low paying jobs.

The role of vocational education in Kentucky's high schools must be reconsidered. Public education must broaden its purpose beyond providing human resources for industry.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA), Inc. gathered information for this report in two ways:

- o a public hearing on equity in education.
- o a review of the literature on educational reform, and

A review of the literature provided us with the necessary background in the history of education, the current educational reform movement, and a national perspective. It did not, however, provide the information necessary to outline the specific equity problems facing Kentucky's children at risk. To gather this information, KYA sponsored a public hearing to provide Kentucky's students, parents, teachers, other educators, and concerned citizens an opportunity to speak.

KYA's Public Hearing

On January 26, 1984, Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA), Inc. sponsored the second in a series of seven hearings across the country. All hearings were sponsored by child advocacy groups who are members of the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS) [See Appendix III]. The hearings were part of a "National Board of Inquiry" sponsored by NCAS which is examining the equity issue in public education [See Appendix III]. The National Board of Inquiry, composed of distinguished leaders in education and child advocacy, shared a common concern that a high quality education should be afforded all students. This board oversaw the nine regional hearings and will issue a final report in October of 1984.

Kentucky Youth Advocates assembled a six member panel to hear public testimony. Harold Howe II, co-chairman of the National Board of Inquiry, chaired the panel. Mr. Howe teaches at the Harvard University School of Education and was formerly U. S. Commissioner of Education in President Lyndon Johnson's administration. Other members of the panel were:

Geoffrey Ellis:	Vice President of the Louisville Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and staff member of the Kentucky Human Rights Commission,
Joan First:	Executive Director of the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS),
Carolyn Hutto:	Teacher and former member of the Jefferson County Board of Education,
Stuart Jay:	Member of the Kentucky State Board of Education and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, and
Dr. Gertrude White-Coleman:	Instructor, Jefferson Community College and former program evaluator for Jefferson County public schools.

Oral testimony was given by parents, students, youth service providers, school administrators, employment specialists, and education advocates representing both rural and urban Kentucky. Written testimony was provided by those unable to attend the public hearing. (See Appendix I.)

A Review of the Literature

KYA conducted a review of the current literature on educational reform. The major national and state reports were consulted as well as studies receiving less notoriety. Additionally, KYA sought an historical perspective by reviewing the history of public education in this country. (See Appendix II for the major resources used for this report.)

FINDINGS

Kentucky's schools are now mandated to educate all children. As we complete the transition from an industrial society to what is being called an informational society, education is becoming increasingly important. Today school has become what one witness called the "gatekeeper to advancement and acceptance."

In our efforts to identify problems in Kentucky's public education system, we looked at how equitably educational services are distributed across the state and within local school districts. The following pages present seven findings which resulted from testimony at the public hearing and the research KYA and NCAS have completed on the equity issues in public education reform. These findings highlight some of the issues that KYA believes need immediate attention if educational reform is to result in excellence for all children.

Many children who attend Kentucky's schools bring with them physical, psychological and social problems, often related to their home situation, that interfere with learning. Neither public education nor social service agencies have fully accepted the responsiblity for addressing these problems.

One theme in the current debate about public education is that we are asking the schools to deal with issues outside the scope of traditional education. The examples cited include hunger, poverty, child abuse, the break-up of the family, teenage pregnancy and youth unemployment. Many believe it is not the school's responsibility to deal with these problems. The fact remains, however, that children facing these problems exist in large numbers and they do attend schools. Regardless of the quality of the education available, children who are hungry, neglected or abused cannot be expected to learn.

We heard from teachers who testified that little happens when they refer a child to the state social services program. We heard from state social workers that teachers do not make referrals soon enough, if at all. We heard from both that the lack of cooperation between the education system and the social services system is frequently a barrier to meeting a child's needs. We also heard that limited state resources often force social workers to set priorities and make choices about which children to serve. At a time when economic conditions have forced more children into poverty, the state and federal governments have cut education and social services for these children:

- In Kentucky, the number of families with children below the poverty level increased from 94,816 to 98,853 between 1970 and 1980. (1970 and 1980, U.S. Census, Urban Studies Center, University of Louisville)

- In 1984 federal funding for compensatory education programs for Kentucky's disadvantaged children is $5,098,000 less than in 1980. (Kentucky Department of Education)

- 7,000 Kentucky children were dropped from the free or reduced school lunch program between 1980 and 1983. (Kentucky Department of Education)

Kentucky has failed to adequately fund both social services and educational programs to meet the needs of children whose parents are unwilling or unable to provide for them. Generations of Kentucky's children have been condemned to ignorance and poverty. It is the responsibility of the citizens of Kentucky to step in and break the poverty cycle. We are failing to do so.

"Dear Mrs. Smith:

I am concerned about Johnny's work in school. He deserves and has a right to success in education and I am trying to make that a reality for him..."

- note to a foster parent from a teacher

Education in Kentucky is underfunded statewide and unequally funded among the 180 local school districts.

One witness, in characterizing some of the educational problems in Kentucky, said the cycle of poverty and the cycle of ignorance are inextricably tied together. The first cannot be broken unless and until the second is broken. Kentucky has the least educated adult population in the nation. In 1980 only 56 percent of those 18 years of age and older had a high school diploma. In that same year, only 11 percent had a college education. Kentucky's per capita income in 1982 ranked 43rd among all states. Some counties in eastern Kentucky are among the poorest in the nation.

Kentucky's per student expenditures in 1982-83 were $2,291 with only eight states below that level. The national average is $2,952. These figures do not tell the whole story. The per student expenditures in Kentucky vary greatly from district to district, from a low of $1,471 to a high of $3,347.

One factor almost exclusively dictated by funding is class size. In Kentucky, the state sets levels of funding based on class sizes of 25 students in grades 1-3 and 27 students in grades 4-12. Kindergarten is funded based on two half-day classes of 25 students. Lowering class size is very expensive. For example, it would cost over five million dollars a year to reduce the fourth grade class size to 25 students and over nine million dollars a year to drop the class size in grades 1-3 to 24 students. Not included in these estimates are local expenses for new classrooms, if required.

Until 1984, school districts were allowed to excede the maximum class size used for funding. Witnesses told us of elementary classes numbering forty and forty-five students. In high school, the class sizes in some districts reached fifty. In 1984, the General Assembly passed legislation which limits class size to 29 students in grades 1-3 and 31 students in grades 4-12. However, no money was appropriated to local districts to reduce the class size.

In an effort to make up for the disparity of wealth between local school districts, Kentucky funds a "power equalization" program. The state gives money to poorer school districts based on a standard tax rate. However, wealthy districts are able to levy higher tax rates than the standard rate. Therefore wealthy districts still collect more revenue per pupil than do the poorer counties. Further, counties must levy taxes at a minimum rate to qualify for power equalization money. In 1982-1983, three counties did not levy taxes at the minimum rate and were, therefore, not eligible for power equalization money, even though they are poor counties.

The way in which Kentucky funds its public schools has been the subject of a continuous debate. In 1983, a commission appointed by Raymond Barber, then Superintendent of Public Instruction, studied Kentucky's financing of public schools. In their report, Equitable Financing of Public Schools, the commission cited problems in the funding program and recommended ways of more equitably funding public education across the state.

In May, 1984, a group of five public school superintendents announced they were seeking support among other school boards and school administrators to file a lawsuit against the Kentucky General Assembly. The suit, filed as a last resort, would ask for more power equalization money. Some school board members and school administrators say state leaders have promised reform for years but actually have accomplished little. The suit is based on the constitutional requirement that the state fund an "efficient" public school system.

Certainly money alone cannot solve all of Kentucky's problems in education, but there are certain things only money can buy. Kentucky has, thus far, not provided the necessary funds to educate all children, regardless of background and county residence.

Discipline in Kentucky schools is often handled in a punitive, exclusionary and arbitrary fashion. Discipline is not seen within the context of creating a positive school climate.

"We are forcing our children all the way to juvenile court to get attention."

- educator

President Reagan has focused on what he sees as the lack of discipline as a major problem in our schools. He urges a "get tough" approach with disruptive students. There is evidence to suggest, however, that the incidence of violence and disruption in our schools has decreased. Certainly Kentucky has not, and currently does not, have the rate of school disruptions experienced by more populated states.

In Kentucky the fact is that children are often severely disciplined for relatively minor offenses. Our research and testimony at the public hearing revealed these facts:

- Children are frequently taken to court and placed in adult jails (in rural counties) or in juvenile detention centers (in urban counties) for truancy or minor infractions of school rules.
- In a single school year, Kentucky's children experience over 15,000 suspensions.
- Suspension from school is used frequently as punishment for non-serious, non-threatening behavior. According to a 1980 Kentucky Department of Education survey, the most frequent reason for suspensions statewide, was "defiance of authority." "Chronic tardiness," "chronic absences," and "profanity and vulgarity" ranked next in that order.
- In a single school year Kentucky children are disciplined over 25,500 times with corporal punishment. This is almost twice the national average.

These figures indicate that large numbers of children do not fit the mold currently expected of students in public schools. It also indicates that room exists for more flexible programming in public schools to allow children success in learning in a positive environment.

Other figures indicate that black children are more likely than white children to be disciplined severely. Data collected by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights shows that black students are over one and a half times as likely as white students to receive corporal punishment. The same data shows that black students are over three times as likely as white students to be suspended. In 1980, black students made up 12% of the student enrollment in Kentucky, but 31% of the total state suspensions.

The Jefferson County school district was sued in 1980 because of racial discrimination in discipline. As a part of settling that lawsuit, Jefferson County adopted a student discipline code that clearly lays out the consequences for certain behaviors. Students, parents and teachers helped develop the code. Witnesses from other districts said development of such codes should be mandatory and should be distributed to each student. The 1984 General Assembly passed a law which requires the development of statewide discipline guidelines and the adoption of a local district code.

Teachers often do not know what to do with disruptive children. One witness said some disruptive students are taken out of the regular classroom and placed in special education classes, which are designed for handicapped children. This is inappropriate for the disruptive child who is misplaced. It also limits access to special classes for handicapped children who really need them. Another witness said suspension of these disruptive students only causes further problems. Suspension may contribute to the dropout problem by demonstrating to students that they are not wanted in school. Further, it does not solve the original problem or teach new more appropriate behavior.

Some schools operate alternative programs for children with discipline problems. In some areas, this means "in-school" suspension, which often lacks a strong academic component. One parent testified that this merely put her son further behind in his academic work, sometimes forcing his absence to avoid a test for which he was

unprepared. Other schools develop entire alternative classes or schools. These students are clearly labeled as different and are excluded for prolonged periods of time from opportunities that other students have. It seems that many alternatives are designed to meet the needs of the school and not the needs of the student. The school receives the state funding for the child's attendance, but in some cases the child receives little or no educational or social services.

When it is necessary to remove a student from school for emotional or behavioral problems, it is often difficult to get them enrolled again. One state official said his social workers often have difficulty enrolling children who are returned to their home communities after residential treatment. Kentucky law allows schools to suspend or expel students for a variety of misbehavior ranging in seriousness from use of profanity to use of dangerous weapons. Some students attempting to re-enroll are openly told they "won't make it through the day." Others are simply not provided the extra attention they need to make the adjustment.

Model programs exist in Kentucky and in the nation to successfully handle discipline in a positive way where schools are safe, teachers are teaching, and all children are learning. Kentucky has not attempted to adopt these model programs on a statewide basis.

Kentucky schools do not work to develop meaningful ways to involve students, parents and other community citizens in decision-making about education.

One complaint frequently voiced by school administrators and teachers is that parents are not sufficiently involved in their children's schooling. However, parental involvement is not actively sought and sometimes is resisted. Parents are encouraged only to play specific, requested roles which are supportive of current school practices and policies. Parents are discouraged, and frequently prohibited, from playing critical, decision-making and monitoring roles in the public school system.

School board meetings are, by law, open to the public. School boards may go into "closed" session only to discuss specific personnel action. Yet many parents report that their local school boards meet in "closed" sessions each time they meet. Some school boards' meeting dates are not announced, so the public does not have an opportunity to attend. Parents sometimes have a difficult time being placed on the agenda and provided an opportunity to address the school boards on budget decisions, curriculum choices or the recruitment process of a new superintendent.

In many Kentucky counties, parents are beginning to organize to confront school boards and school administrators. It appears that the exclusion of parents occurs subtlely in urban counties and blatantly in rural counties. Ways in which parents are excluded include:

- Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled only during regular working hours. This is particularly difficult for the "working poor" as they tend to have employers who are not sympathetic to family responsibilities. These parents may well be sacrificing the family income if they attempt to obtain leave for a parent-teacher conference.

- In many cases, parents are not made to feel welcome when they do come into the school. This is very intimidating to many parents.

- In many schools, parents are not part of organized committees to study and make decisions about school policies and practices in such areas as financial management, discipline codes for students, curriculum development, and textbook selection.

- In many schools, parents are not asked to evaluate, monitor, or make recommendations on school policy or practices.

Parental involvement is mandated by federal law for the education of handicapped children. Yet many schools attempt to exclude parents by not informing them of their rights to participate in designing an educational plan for their child. One witness stated that schools feel they have nothing to gain by informing parents of their rights.

It is doubtful that today's parents are any less interested in their children's schooling than those in the past. One witness suggested that "affirmative action" on the part of the schools is needed to facilitate the parent's involvement in their child's education.

> *"(we try to) educate parents to ask questions so kids get an education, but we didn't get answers (from school personnel)."*
>
> *- parent*

Kentucky's decision-makers are moving to raise standards without providing additional educational services necessary for many students to meet these standards. Raising standards without increasing educational services will only assure failure for increasing numbers of students.

Some experts leading the national educational debate point to lower achievement test scores as evidence of the problems in schools. The solution most often proposed is to raise standards. Operationally, this often means to test students more often, use tests as criteria for advancement or graduation, increase the number of credits required for high school graduation, emphasize the basics and generally make school "tougher".

The question must be asked: If only 65% of Kentucky's high school students are meeting current standards (that is, graduating from high school), how will simply raising those standards improve the quality of education? Two existing problems must be addressed to assist all students in meeting the new, higher standards.

First, it must be pointed out that raising standards and raising expectations are not the same. Many social science studies have demonstrated that students, and people in general, perform in direct relationship to the expectations placed on them. Some students do not do well in school because they are not expected to. It is important that teachers believe all of their students can achieve. Because of early testing, low ability grouping, misclassification, and the lack of compensatory and remedial education, some children get the message at a very young age that they are "failures" in school.

Secondly, all children begin school at different levels, and respond differently to different teaching methods. This does not have to mean failure for any child. Schools can provide compensatory educational programs, varying teaching methods, and remedial work if necessary. It is very important that these educational programs be fully funded in each local district.

A related concern is the assessment process used by local districts. Frequently, assessment takes the form of a single test. Other factors such as parental input, teacher observation, and daily classroom work may not be considered when making a decision about a child's educational future. When a decision is based on a single piece of evidence, the potential for error is great.

Additionally, when tests are used as part of an assessment process, it is important that they be selected and used carefully. Frequent problems with the use of tests are:

- o Some tests are racially, sexually or culturally biased. A test designed for children in an urban area, for example, may not be appropriate for children in a rural area.
- o Tests may be misused, in that they may be used for purposes other than that for which they were designed.
- o Test results are frequently misunderstood or misinterpreted by teachers and by parents.

A specific concern is the use of student competency testing. It makes little sense to test a child, conclude he is behind grade level and then make no effort to bring him up to grade level. When a child is tested, remediation must follow. To some extent Kentucky has failed to provide this remediation. The 1978 General Assembly enacted the Educational Improvement Act which mandated comprehensive basic skills testing in grades 3, 5, 7 and 10. The remediation portion of the act was never funded. Instead the schools relied on federal compensatory education funding (commonly called Title I). This funding is only available to financially eligible districts and has been decreased by $5,008,000 in Kentucky since 1980. Fortunately, the 1984 General Assembly did appropriate 18 million dollars for remediation in first and second grades.

Many Kentucky students are not meeting current educational standards because they are not expected to and thus are not provided the educational services needed for success. Expectations must be raised and educational services must be extended to all students. Only then will raising standards achieve the desired goal for all children.

"How would we respond if our hospitals failed at the same rate our schools do?"

- Harold Howe II

Basic skills are being defined too narrowly in Kentucky's schools. Many of the competencies students need most are ignored in the rush "back to basics."

While the witnesses at the hearing probably could not agree on the purpose of education, they all agreed it was broader than teaching the three R's (reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic [sic]). It is broader even than preparing students for a job after graduation. In fact, the main purpose of education is to prepare children for participation in a democratic society. Children must obtain the knowledge and the skills necessary to participate in our political process, to be active in the community, to pursue job training and employment, and to enjoy a family life. Herbert Kohl, in his book Basic Skills, has redefined basic skills as the ability to:

- use language well and thoughtfully;
- think through problems and experiment with solutions;
- understand scientific and technical ideas and use tools;
- use the imagination to participate in and appreciate personal and group expression;
- understand how people function in groups; and
- learn how to learn throughout life and to contribute to the nurturance of others.

Kentucky is calling for a move "back to basics." In the last legislative session, consumer education, career education and environmental education were removed from the mandated curriculum.

They were thought to be distracting from the basic subjects. The move to spend more school time on "the basics" may be a necessary part of school reform. However, "the basics" must be redefined to include the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the broader purpose of education.

The current trend in public education is to narrowly gear education to the job market. This vocational education trend will not result in better job opportunities for most students and in many cases will deny them a sound academic education.

The national reports have attempted to link the crisis in public education with the decline in the American economy. In pushing her education reform package in the 1984 General Assembly, Governor Collins cited it as necessary for economic development. Clearly, there is an historical link between the increased educational achievement of the nation and the increase in the number of better paying professional and managerial jobs.

This trend, according to our witnesses, is decreasing. While no one can predict what the job market will look like in fifteen years, almost all studies indicate that most jobs will be service oriented. The five jobs with the largest growth in terms of numbers of job openings are:

- o janitors,
- o nurses aides and orderlies,
- o sales clerks,
- o cashiers and
- o waiters and waitresses.

With the exception of elementary teachers, nurses and accountants, the twenty fastest growing jobs are all service and technical jobs that are low status and low paying.

The job market is, in fact, polarizing with fewer high skilled, high paying jobs and more low skilled, low paying jobs. The manufacturing jobs that used to occupy the middle are decreasing

rapidly. Automation has increased efficiency but eliminated jobs. One witness told us that in the next twenty years people who hold manufacturing jobs will fall from 21 percent of the work force to less than 10 percent, eliminating 10 to 15 million jobs nationally.

Another change in the job market is that most workers will change careers several times during their lives. It will be disasterous for youth to prepare for only one career. This fact reinforces the need to expand the basic skills to include critical thinking and lifetime learning.

The 1984 legislature passed a law which now allows Kentucky high schools to issue a vocational education certificate in lieu of a high school diploma. Many witnesses suggested that secondary education in Kentucky has become a "sorting process". High school students are "sorted" into academically gifted, academically average, and non-academic categories. This sorting process places a limit on a student's academic progress and may decide at the early age of 14 or 15 the student's employment (or unemployment) future.

Students who are labeled "non-academic" are generally placed in vocational education programs. The assumption is that the student will learn a "trade" and become immediately employable after graduating. The reality is that:

- o the student has not received enough academic preparation to become employable,
- o the student's vocational skills are not advanced enough to compete, and
- o the student may have been trained in a vocation for which there is no market, only high unemployment.

Additionally, many students are placed in "non-academic" programs for reasons other than lack of academic progress. Disruptive students and those who are considered "dropout" potential are often placed in non-academic programs, regardless of their academic progress or potential.

Kentucky decision-makers must reevaluate the purpose and the role of vocational education in our high schools. They must also address problems of access to academic programs for all children.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of education is to prepare all children for full participation in a democratic society. This means that all children must have the knowledge and the skills necessary to:

- o actively participate in the national, state and local political processes,
- o pursue job training and life-long learning,
- o obtain employment, and
- o enjoy community and family life.

From this purpose flow the principles upon which educational reform should be based.

KYA has outlined eight principles which we believe set the stage for providing a quality education for all children. These principles establish guidelines for addressing current problems in education, many of which are specific to Kentucky.

The eight principles are:

1. Educational excellence is not possible without equity in education. Kentucky must be committed to providing a quality education to <u>all children</u>.

2. School reform in Kentucky must include the provision of necessary social services to children and their families. Social service agencies and education systems must work together to ensure that both social service needs and educational needs are met. The Kentucky General Assembly must make a commitment to fully fund social service and educational programs for disadvantaged children.

3. The quality of education available to students should not depend on the wealth of the community where the student lives. State decision makers should examine the unmet needs of all children. A plan should then be developed for the most equitable way to generate necessary revenue and allocate funds to meet the educational needs of all Kentucky's children.

4. Schools must be positive places in which to study and teach. The learning environment must reflect the democratic commitment to the inclusion of all, a respect and appreciation for every student's culture, and a respect for the full constitutional rights of students and teachers.

5. High educational expectations and standards must be accompanied by clear commitments of support for students and staff. There must be a full dedication to the development of every child's potential for learning and a willingness to restructure or reorganize schools so that all children can learn.

6. Parents, teachers, students, and concerned citizens must work together to achieve the goals of quality education for every child. Schools should develop and implement "affirmative action" plans for involving these groups of people.

7. The curriculum of the schools must deal with the needs of the whole child. Focusing too much attention on narrowly defined "basics" or on vocational education undermines the broader and equally important goals of developing children's intellectual capacities, personal strengths, and their sense of social and civic responsibility.

8. Today's marketplace should not dictate educational reform measures. Rather, educational reform should seek to provide children with the necessary skills to make changes, to improve all aspects of our society, including the marketplace.

"As kids' self-esteem improved, success in school became more important to them."

- educator

APPENDIX I: WRITTEN AND ORAL TESTIMONY

Public Hearing on Education
January 26, 1984

- Clovene
  Parent Advocate (Louisville)
- Dan Connell
  Director, Kentuckiana
  Metroversity Educational
  Opportunity Center (Louisville)
- Dr. Gregg Corr
  Director, Student Parent Aid
  and Resource Center
  (Louisville)
- Joyce Everly
  Floyd County Citizens'
  Education Council
  (Prestonsburg)
- Maureen Fitzgerald
  Protection and Advocacy
  Division, Office of Public
  Advocacy (Frankfort)
- Helen Gaines
  Student, Jefferson State
  Vocational School (Louisville)
- Rod Hartzler
  Division of Children's
  Services, Fayette County
  (Lexington)
- Cathy Hatfield
  Floyd County Citizens'
  Education Council
  (Prestonsburg)
- Jon Henrikson
  President, Kentucky Education
  Association (Louisville)
- Donna Herndon
  Director, Alumni Affairs,
  Murray State University
  (Murray)
- Dr. David Keller
  Executive Director, Kentucky
  School Boards Association
  (Frankfort)
- Jane LaPin
  Retired teacher and guidance
  counselor (Louisville)
- Carol Larkin
  Parent Advocate (Louisville)
- Jim Lesousky
  Manager, Department of
  Employment Services, Cabinet
  for Human Resources
  (Louisville)
- Nell McGlothlin
  Education Chairperson,
  Louisville League of Women
  Voters (Louisville)
- Nancy Rawlings
  Director, Division of
  Children's Services, Fayette
  County (Lexington)
- Dr. Samual Robinson
  Executive Director, Lincoln
  Foundation (Louisville)
- Robert Sexton
  Executive Director, Prichard
  Committee for Academic
  Excellence (Lexington)
- Dr. H. M. Snodgrass
  Director, Planning Unit,
  Kentucky Department of
  Education (Frankfort)
- Scott Trimble
  Director, Testing Unit,
  Kentucky Department of
  Education (Frankfort)
- Dr. Robin Welch
  Director, Division for
  Children's Residential
  Services, Department of Social
  Services, Cabinet for Human
  Resources (Frankfort)
- Patricia P. Wentzel
  Parents and Advocates for
  Children in Education
  (Louisville)
- Larry Williams
  Student, Jefferson State
  Vocational School (Louisville)
- Stephanie Wilson
  Citizens for Better Schools
  (Lexington)

APPENDIX II: RESOURCES

Academic Preparation for College, The College Board, 1983

Action for Excellence, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983

A Blueprint for Kentucky's Public Schools: Building Educational Excellence, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, 1983

Broken Promises, W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson, 1982

Discipline Problems in Kentucky Schools, Kentucky Department of Education, 1980

Equitable Financing of Public Schools, Superintendent's Commission for State School Financing, Kentucky Department of Public Instruction, 1983

High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America, The Carnegie Foundation, 1983

Making the Grade, The Twentieth Century Fund, 1983

A Nation at Risk, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983

The 1980 Census of Kentucky, Urban Studies Center, University of Louisville

An Opportunity for Excellence, Kentuckians for Excellence in Education Task Force, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, 1984

The Trouble Crusade, Diane Ravitch, Basic Books, 1983

APPENDIX III: NATIONAL COALITION OF ADVOCATES FOR STUDENTS (NCAS)

Member Organizations

Advocates for Children of New York, New York, NY

Center for Law and Education, Cambridge, MA & Washington, D.C.

Chicano Education Project, Denver, CO & Center, CO

Children's Defense Fund, Washington, D.C. & Jackson, MS

Citizens' Council for Ohio Schools, Cleveland/Columbus, OH

Citizens Education Center, Seattle, WA

Coalition for Quality Education, Toledo, OH

Designs for Change Chicago, IL

Education Law Center, Inc., Philadelphia, PA/Newark, NJ

Kentucky Youth Advocates, Inc., Louisville, KY

Massachusetts Advocacy Center, Boston, MA

National Black Child Development Institute, Washington, DC

Parents Union for Public Schools, Philadelphia, PA

Southwestern Public Education Program, Columbia, SC & Macon, GA

Statewide Youth Advocacy, Rochester, NY

Student Advocacy Center, Ann Arbor, MI

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Kentucky Youth Advocates, Inc., organized in 1975, and incorporated in 1977, operates as a non-profit, tax exempt, independent public interest organization. Kentucky Youth Advocates is supported by contributions, foundations and government grants. Kentucky Youth Advocates' primary role is assuring that governmental human services agencies and Kentucky's public schools are carrying out their statutory responsibilities on behalf of children. Most children who need these services are poor or otherwise disadvantaged.

Broadly speaking, Kentucky Youth Advocates tries to make government agencies accountable to the needs of children. Kentucky Youth Advocates' primary means of monitoring is to listen to children, their families, and other agencies who are reluctant or unable to raise questions about existing policy.

Kentucky Youth Advocates has offices in Louisville and Frankfort.